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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2130  
INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA  
AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
AMEMBASSY LIMA  
USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
AMEMBASSY HANOI  
DOJ WASHDC  
NSC WASHDC  
JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
SECDEF WASHDC  
DIRONDCP WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 005539

EMBASSY HANOI FOR PAUL BERG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 6/19/21

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SUBJECT: FARC ANNOUNCE INTENTION TO RELEASE ADDITIONAL 250  
SOLDIERS AND POLICEMEN/CONTINUE TO KIDNAP AND EXTORT

REF: BOGOTA 5460

1.(U) CLASSIFIED BY CDA BARBARA C. MOORE, REASONS 1.5 (B,D).

12. (C) ON JUNE 18, THE FARC RELEASED AN ADDITIONAL GROUP OF COLOMBIAN SOLDIERS AND POLICEMEN, BRINGING THE TOTAL OF RELEASED IN THE FIRST HUMANITARIAN EXCHANGE TO 55. GOC PEACE COMMISSIONER CAMILO GOMEZ ADMITTED TO THE PRESS THAT THE FARC HAD NOT ALLOWED THE ICRC TO GIVE MEDICAL EXAMS TO THE CAPTURED SOLDIERS AND POLICEMEN, THUS VIOLATING A KEY ASPECT OF THE HUMANITARIAN EXCHANGE AGREEMENT. INSTEAD, THE FARC REPORTEDLY CONDUCTED THE MEDICAL EXAMS THEMSELVES. THE PRESS REPORTS THAT THREE OF THE MOST SERIOUSLY ILL POLICEMEN/SOLDIERS WERE NOT RELEASED (TWO REPORTEDLY SUFFER FROM SERIOUS FORMS OF CANCER), WHILE MANY OF THE RELEASED WERE IN GOOD HEALTH. GOC PEACE NEGOTIATOR LUIS GUILLERMO GIRALDO (PROTECT) TOLD POLOFF ON JUNE 19 THAT HE AND OTHERS IN THE GOC SUSPECT THAT THE FARC IS KEEPING THE THREE SERIOUSLY ILL SOLDIERS/POLICEMEN TO INCREASE PUBLIC PRESSURE ON THE GOC TO NEGOTIATE A POLICEMEN/SOLDIERS FOR GUERRILLA SWAP, MUCH LIKE THEY HAD TRIED TO DO WITH THE CASE OF GRAVELY ILL POLICE COL. ACOSTA. GIRALDO AFFIRMED THAT THE FARC STRATEGY IS TO CONVINCE THE GOC TO HAVE SIMULTANEOUS, PERMANENT SWAPS SO AS TO (IN THEIR VIEW) RAISE THEIR INTERNATIONAL COMBATANT STATUS.

13. (C) ON JUNE 19 THE FARC CENTRAL COMMAND ANNOUNCED THAT THEY WILL UNILATERALLY LIBERATE AN ADDITIONAL 250 SOLDIERS AND POLICEMEN ON JUNE 28, AND INVITED THE COLOMBIAN POLICE AND ARMED FORCES TO BE PRESENT WHEN THE RELEASE TAKES PLACE "AS A GESTURE OF SOLIDARITY." GIRALDO TOLD POLOFF THAT THE FARC FEEL A SIMULTANEOUS, PERMANENT EXCHANGE AGREEMENT WITH THE GOC WOULD BENEFIT THEM AND UNDERMINE THE COLOMBIAN SECURITY FORCES IN THREE WAYS: ONE, SINCE THE COLOMBIAN ARMED FORCES HIERARCHY HAS EXPRESSED OPPOSITION TO AN EXCHANGE AGREEMENT PUBLICLY, A GOC DECISION TO ACQUIESCE TO THE FARC ON THIS ISSUE WOULD CREATE FURTHER CIVIL-MILITARY TENSIONS; SECONDLY, SOLDIERS AND POLICEMEN WOULD BE MORE LIKELY TO SURRENDER IN THE BATTLEFIELD RATHER THAN FIGHT IF THEY KNOW THEY WILL BE SWAPPED QUICKLY, AND, THIRD, THE FARC WOULD BE ABLE TO QUICKLY REPLENISH THEIR DEPLETED MID-LEVEL BATTLEFIELD CADRES. GIRALDO ADDED THAT THE FARC HAS SHOWN NO INTEREST IN MOVING FROM THE HUMANITARIAN EXCHANGE AGREEMENT TO A DISCUSSION OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW OR NEGOTIATIONS TO DECREASE THE LEVEL OF VIOLENCE, MUCH LESS A CEASE FIRE.

14. (C) SEPARATELY, ON JUNE 12 LIBERAL PARTY PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE HORACIO SERPA AND LIBERAL PARTY PRESIDENT LUIS GUILLERMO VELEZ TOLD POLOFFS THAT LIBERAL SENATOR LUIS ELADIO PEREZ BONILLA HAD BEEN KIDNAPPED THREE DAYS EARLIER IN NARINO DEPARTMENT, REPORTEDLY BY THE FARC. SINCE THAT

TIME, PEREZ'S KIDNAPPING HAS BEEN CONFIRMED, WITH ALL INDICATIONS LEADING TO THE FARC. IN ADDITION, VELEZ STATED ON JUNE 17 THAT HE HAS BEEN WARNED BY THE FARC THAT HE MUST EITHER PAY A "WAR TAX" ("VACUNA") OR BE A KIDNAPPING TARGET.

5.(C) COMMENT: DESPITE THE HOPES RAISED BY THE HUMANITARIAN EXCHANGE AND POSSIBLE FOLLOW-UP UNILATERAL RELEASE OF SOLDIERS AND POLICEMEN, THE FARC CONTINUE TO SHOW THAT THEY ARE NOT YET INTERESTED IN DISCUSSING WITH THE GOC THE KINDS OF ISSUES THAT WOULD GENUINELY REDUCE THE LEVEL OF VIOLENCE OR MOVE TOWARDS EVENTUAL RESOLUTION OF THE CONFLICT. INSTEAD, THEIR RECENT ACTIONS -- DISREGARD FOR HUMANITARIAN EXCHANGE GROUND RULES, KIDNAPPING OF SEN. PEREZ, AND THE AUDACIOUS THREAT AGAINST THE LIBERAL PARTY PRESIDENT -- DEMONSTRATE A LEVEL OF ARROGANCE MOST COLOMBIANS ARE ALL TOO USED TO.

MOORE

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